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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

USUN PASS TO SE YATES

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SUBJECT: Somalia President Previews Washington Visit

Classified by Ambassador Michael Ranneberger for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

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Summary  
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11. (C) The Ambassador hosted Somalia Transition Federal President Abdullahi Ahmed Yusuf at his residence April 12 to preview the President's April 15-24 visit to New York and Washington. Yusuf confirmed that his agenda was our agenda - strengthening the TFG, working to achieve UNSC support for peacekeeping in Somalia, reconciliation, moving forward on the transition, and addressing the humanitarian situation. Yusuf said he intends to ask Ethiopian PM Meles in New York to sustain Ethiopian military assistance in Somalia until such time as UN peacekeepers can engage. Yusuf is looking forward to his New York and Washington visits. End Summary.

12. (C) Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullah Ahmed Yusuf, along with key staff who will be accompanying him to New York and Washington, met with the Ambassador at his residence on April 12 to discuss his visit to New York and Washington. Yusuf planned to fly straight to New York, arriving April 14, and return via London o/a April 24/25 where he will get a medical checkup. The President appeared to be in fine health and spirits, and was looking forward to his trip and anticipated high-level meetings in Washington.

13. (C) The Ambassador previewed for the President issues he should expect to discuss in Washington, but also at the UN Security Council. While other issues are likely to be raised, the Ambassador advised Yusuf to be prepared to address:

- how we can work together to strengthen TFG ministries and security forces;
- efforts to deploy a UN peacekeeping force;
- TFG efforts at genuine reconciliation;
- the transition; and,
- the humanitarian situation.

14. (C) Strengthening the capacity of TFG ministries and the security forces is a key assistance priority for the USG, said the Ambassador. Yusuf stressed that it is most important to strengthen the TFG's capacity to provide security. The Ethiopians expected 8,000 AMISOM troops, said Yusuf, but there are only 2,500, and "African troops are not so good at fighting, except Ethiopians and Somalis." Yusuf plans to meet Ethiopian PM Meles in New York and ask him to keep Ethiopian forces in Somalia until such time as the UN can deploy peacekeeping forces.

15. (C) The Ambassador said the opportunity now is ripe for gaining UNSC support for a peacekeeping operation in Somalia. South Africa is Chair of the Security Council in April, and the UK will follow in

May. Yusuf confirmed he will ask for a UN peacekeeping force, and he expressed hope that the U.S., UK, and France will support it. However, Yusuf also acknowledged that foreign forces will never be as effective as Somalis in providing security, and he asked the U.S. to assist with the training, equipping, and sustainment of a 10,000 strong Somali security force "to be trained inside Somalia."

16. (C) The Ambassador reassured the President that the recent USG meetings in Nairobi with the Alliance for Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) were based on our desire to advance reconciliation and our strong support for UN SRSG Ould-Abdallah. The objective is not to reopen the TFG Charter, but rather TFG-ARS discussions to see if the ARS is willing to participate peacefully in the Somalia political process. U.S. designation of the Shabaab was also discussed. The President championed the designation, declaring that the Shabaab will never declare peace, and the TFG and international community therefore must marginalize, isolate, and destroy them -- "there is no other way." Yusuf made a distinction between the Shabaab and other opposition elements (Comment: Yusuf has not made this differentiation as clearly in the past. End Comment). The Ambassador stressed that while we should not deal with the Shabaab, we believe the ARS can be engaged in dialogue.

17. (C) Yusuf questioned the intelligence and political savvy of both Sharif Hassan and Sheikh Sharif, the two ARS leaders. However, he declared, if they are ready for serious dialogue, then the TFG might be willing to grant some concessions. As an example of his willingness to compromise the President relayed his personal history with the current President of Puntland, Mohamud Adde Muse, who at one time he fought and then later supported to succeed him. The Ambassador hit on the high points of our discussion with the ARS and assured the President that Ould-Abdallah intends to discuss reconciliation and political solutions that are in keeping with the Transitional Federal Charter. As requested by the SRSG, and in

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support of Prime Minister Hussein, we also encouraged the President to appoint and empower a small TFG team for the purpose of discussions with the ARS. Yusuf said he would do this.

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Comments on Prime Minister  
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18. (C) Yusuf, and his entourage, insisted that no one is against reconciliation. The problem, said the President, is that the PM is not talking with the Parliament and his cabinet. Parliament is legally required to approve any agreement that comes out of a government dialogue with the opposition. Therefore, Parliament should be consulted with and kept abreast of the Prime Minister's actions with regard to reconciliation and meetings with the opposition "in a transparent manner." According to the President, "I know what the PM is doing, but he is not conveying it to others." Yusuf claimed the Parliament is afraid that the PM alone is going to "agree with the opposition." Citing Nur Adde's long absence from the country and lack of political experience, the President said the PM needs to communicate better and convince the Parliament of what he is seeking to achieve. (Comment: The PM has told us, and the Somalia Ambassador to Kenya has confirmed, that repeated efforts over recent weeks to communicate with the President have been fruitless. During the approximately 36 hours from April 10-12 when the PM and President overlapped in Mogadishu the PM called twice on the President in person and was told both times the President was sleeping. The PM learned later that other visitors were granted access. End Comment)

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Humanitarian Focal Point  
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19. (C) The Ambassador also stressed that a key issue was the declining humanitarian situation in Somalia and the lack of a focal person to coordinate efforts. President Yusuf replied that the focal point is the Ministry of the Interior and the problem was that the "international community is not coordinating with us." The President's entourage explained that it is not just one person that is being requested, but a fully staffed and presumably fully equipped

office with the capacity to coordinate programs and humanitarian activities. We explained that training and supporting such an office may be possible through our assistance efforts.

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Coordination with the SRSG  
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¶10. (C) We contacted Ould-Abdallah both before and after our meeting with Yusuf to compare notes and confirm messages. Yusuf met with Ould-Abdallah immediately following his meeting with us. The SRSG reported that his meeting with Yusuf, who he has now taken to calling "the old man," was tough. The President is sticking with his focus on security, and he has not been forthcoming with names for the TFG delegation to Ould-Abdallah's talks in Djibouti that are scheduled to commence in May. Ould-Abdallah's tactic is to reassure Yusuf at every step and to play to the President's ego -- it's the President's reconciliation plan and it's the President's chance to secure his place in history as the "savior" of Somalia. We encouraged the President to continue his support for reconciliation, and to work closely with both the PM and SRSG Ould-Abdallah as they attempt to broaden the TFG's base of support.

RANNEBERGER